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To sum up the results of this examination, the primitive Indian was as savage in his religion as in his life. He was divided between fetich-worship and that next degree of religious development which consists in the worship of deities embodied in the human form. His conception of their attributes was such as might have been expected. His gods were no whit better than himself. Even when he borrows from Christianity the idea of a supreme and universal spirit, his tendency is to reduce him to a local habitation and a bodily shape; and this tendency disappears only in tribes that have been long in contact with civilized white men. The primitive Indian, yielding his untutored homage to one all-pervading and omnipotent spirit, is a dream of poets, rhetoricians, and sentimentalists.

- ART. II. — 1. *Indian Epic Poetry, being the Substance of Lectures recently given at Oxford.* By MONIER WILLIAMS. London. 1863.
2. *Poésie Héroïque des Indiens.* Par F. G. EICHHOFF. Paris. 1860.
3. *Onze Épisodes du Mahabharata.* Traduits par ED. FOUCAUX. Paris. 1862.
4. *Traduction complète du Mahabharata.* Par H. FAUCHE. Vol. I. Paris. 1863.
5. *Ardschuna's Reise zu Indra's Himmel. — Diluvium cum III. aliis Maha-Bharati Episodis. — Nala und Damayanti.* Uebersetzt von FRANZ BOPP. Berlin. 1824, 1829, 1838.

It was in 1785 that the English Orientalist, Wilkins, gave to the world the first Sanscrit publication printed in Europe; and this was the original text, with a translation, of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, one of the episodes of the colossal Hindoo epopee, the immeasurable *Mahabharata*. At that time neither Wilkins nor any one else could ever dream of translating, or even deciphering, the whole of the vast composition; and although as early as 1806 men like Wilhelm Schlegel undertook to exam-

ine portions of it for archæological, linguistical, or historical purposes, giving us a multitude of valuable results, no one for the long interval of three quarters of a century ever ventured to do much by way of exposition of either the whole or even any considerable part of it. Indeed, at that time such a thing could not reasonably be expected; for, up to the year 1834, by far the greater part of the text of the original existed only in manuscript, and this even was probably rarely accessible except in fragments. It was in that year that the Asiatic Society of Bengal began to issue a complete edition of the text, and in 1839 the whole of it appeared, in four quartos, at Calcutta.

The work, having thus come fairly within the reach of European scholars, soon gave rise to a new epoch of its exploration for the varied ends of erudition and of science. Among the first of those who applied themselves with new ardor to the study of it was the distinguished Eugène Burnouf, of the College of France, who not only devoted an extra weekly lecture to the examination of the venerable literary monument, but who also urged some of the most promising of his students to enlist in the treatment of portions of it with a view to speedy publication.

His call was not neglected, and we soon find three of his most eminent young friends earnestly at work. The first of the number was M. Pavie, who in 1844 edited eight fragments of the poem, to which, in 1860, M. Edward Foucaux added eleven others, interpreted by himself. But by far the most enterprising of the number is M. H. Fauche, the distinguished and learned translator of the *Gita-Govinda*, of the poetical works of Kalidasa, of the *Ramayana*, and other Sanscrit works, who has undertaken to crown his labors in this department of Oriental letters by giving to the world a complete version of the vast epos, which it is expected will fill no less than sixteen volumès. The thanks of all Orientalists and lovers of literature will doubtless become due to M. Fauche for not shrinking from an undertaking which others have pronounced impracticable, or at any rate unpromising. The interpreter of *Panini*, M. Theodor Goldstücker, confesses having commenced a German version of the same poem, which he soon

relinquished, declaring it impossible either to comprehend the original properly or to render it with exactness, until a much larger number of manuscripts shall have been collated, and the native scholia and glosses (as yet almost entirely unknown) properly examined and digested. The same opinion is substantially advocated by M. Émile Wattier, who a short time ago published a French version of the sixteenth canto of the epos. He suggests that it would be more desirable, in the first place, to eliminate from the body of the work the innumerable additions and interpolations by which it is admitted to be encumbered, and then to give to the world only such portions as shall be recognized as authentic, primitive, and genuine beyond a doubt. So much the more credit will therefore be due to the intrepidity of M. Fauche for refusing to wait for a more critical recension of the poet; and if, on that account, his work shall here and there fall short of absolute perfection, it will, nevertheless, not only prove a source of profit and of pleasure to many, but it may perhaps even aid us in the work of tracing the genuine substance of the primitive composition with more exactness.

In speaking here of Burnouf and his school, it would be ungrateful not to recollect what Germany has done for our epopee. If to William Schlegel we are indebted for an early translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, we owe to the indefatigable Bopp German and Latin versions of a number of episodes and other portions of this poem, some of which date back as far as 1829, while *savans* like Lassen and Weber have provided us with many invaluable archæological aids. The work is therefore no longer enveloped in a mist; we have enough of it translated and elucidated to offer a complete survey of it.

The name of the epos signifies nothing less than *The Great Bharata*, which is an abridged expression for "The Great History of the Race of Bharata," the son of Dushmanta and Sakuntala, not to be mistaken for the brother of the divine Rama of the same name. The subtilty of the Hindus, however, not satisfied with this explanation, resorts to another fanciful etymology, the result of a most unwarrantable play upon the word *bhara*, which means a weight of gold. In the general table of contents prefixed to the poem, it is called

the fifth *Veda* of Vyasa, with the addition of the following curious explanation: "When the assembled gods had put the four Vedas into one scale of the balance and the Bharata into the other, it was then found that the latter carried the weight over the four Vedas with all their mysteries; and from that moment it has, in this world, received the appellation of *Mahabharata* (that is to say, 'the great weight')."'

But leaving aside this etymological *niaiserie*, let us at once proceed to take a rapid glance at the general characteristics, the probable authorship, the history and subject of the epos before us, and then to offer lastly a brief outline of the different rhapsodies or cantos into which the colossus is divided.

The most striking peculiarity connected with this poem, as compared with others of the same class, is its enormous extent, the *princeps* text of the Calcutta edition, divided into eighteen *parvans*, or books, offering us no less than 107,389 *slokas*, or distichs, of which each has regularly four hemistichs, and is symmetrically composed of thirty-two long or short syllables, arranged according to the laws of prosody. It is certain, however, that this vast number of verses did not enter into the original form of the poem. We must, in the first place, deduct the 16,374 *slokas* of the *Harivansa*, a supplement added to this edition of the Mahabharata, but universally conceded to be of posterior origin; and then we must also remember that, of the innumerable episodes, the great majority did not form part of the original composition; they are manifestly of various dates, some very ancient, others much later, and have gradually, at sundry times, found their way into the body of the great poetic encyclopædia. With all these subtractions made from the vast figure given above, it has been found that the verses of the Mahabharata proper would be reduced to the number of only about 40,000 or 50,000. But even after this diminution, the dimensions of the poem are still quite extraordinary, when we remember that the *Æneid* contains only about 10,000 verses; the *Iliad*, 15,000; the *Odyssey*, 12,000; while the longest rhymed romances of the Middle Age—as, for example, the "Alexander the Great" of the Trouvères De Bernay and Le Court—do not transcend the limits of about 23,000 verses. Be this, however, as it may, the Hindus themselves for ages past have not had the

least doubt that everything contained in their great national work is not only genuine, but sacred; and not only this, but they have even a tradition that the Mahabharata in their possession, which they call the *human* copy, has a celestial prototype in a much more extensive one belonging to the gods, which has been ascertained to contain no less than twelve millions of verses, exact measure! The unabridged dimensions of the human Mahabharata are excelled only by the great national epos of the Kalmucks, — the *Dshangariade*, mentioned by the traveller Bergmann, — which, if his report can be credited, is divided into no less than three hundred and sixty sections, each of them of three or four times the extent of one of the books of Homer's *Iliad*!

The question of the authorship of so extensive a composition as the Mahabharata is not one of difficult solution, when we recollect what recent investigations have rendered probable in reference to the works of Homer, and have made certain in reference to the epos of the Germans, the *Nibelungen*, which in its present shape is now known to be but a redaction of a variety of rhapsodies of a much older date, formerly in vogue, not only among the Germans, but also among the Scandinavians, where we yet find a number of them preserved in the historical portion of the Eddas. The same may be observed of the old Spanish *Romancero* of the Cid. Now if, in the case of all these poetical collections, we are obliged to admit the evidence of more than one author, — of a family or series of successive poets concerned in their production, — the case of the Mahabharata is a still stronger one; and it is, indeed, almost incredible that a work of such vast dimensions and such checkered contents should have emanated from one mind, or ever been redacted by one hand. There is every indication to the contrary, in spite of the fact that the Hindus themselves claim the authorship for one man; for this claim is based upon a tradition so fabulous, that, so far from invalidating the internal evidence of the work, it cannot even be defended against the charge of inconsistency and contradiction. To prove that this is so, it is only necessary to produce the account, which is as follows. The author of the Mahabharata is no less august a personage than the mysterious *rishi* and *muni* (i. e. patriarch

and hermit) Krishna-Dvaipayana, more commonly known by the name of Vyasa, which signifies the arranger, the rhapsodist, or the compiler.

The *rishi* is supposed to have flourished somewhere between the fifteenth and the twelfth century before our era, and was venerated as the author of several other works, and as the high authority to which the Vedas, some of the Puranas, and other orthodox books, are indebted for their present form. He is spoken of as the son of the sage Parasara and of the beautiful Satyawati. One day, the legend informs us, he came to an island of the river Yamuna, and there became the father, or at any rate the guardian, of the two princes, Dhritarashtra and Pandu, whose sons, as we shall presently see, are the heroes of his epopee.

In the poem Vyasa is himself frequently spoken of, but always in the third person, and as one of the personages of the action; so that it would appear that in extreme old age the *rishi* had himself an opportunity to witness and recount all the actions of his descendants. As for his work, he is himself said to have instructed his pupil, Vaiscampayava, to commit it to memory; and in this the latter succeeded so well as to recite the whole of it on the occasion of a grand sacrifice offered by one of the heroes of the poem, Djasnamedjaya. A second recital of the poem, and of the poem as we have it now, is said to have been made by Ugrasravas, in the presence of a society of sages assembled in the forest of Naimishma, upon the occasion of a religious solemnity instituted by the legislator Saunaka. It was upon this occasion that the text of it was definitively and forever settled by being committed to writing, which art had then just been invented; and a great number of interlocutors and narrators are mentioned as having taken part in the proceedings.

It is almost superfluous to observe, that this account presents too many improbabilities and anachronisms to stand in need of much discussion. For although it be not impossible that some Vyasa may have composed legendary poems on this theme, it is yet manifest that a host of imitators subsequently added so many of their own inspirations as almost to obliterate the primitive composition, and that the final redaction could not

have been made until centuries after its first portions were composed. Thus, while certain portions of the poem offer us the incontestable marks of a very high antiquity, others are of so recent an origin that they can scarcely be referred farther back than the third century of our era.

It would appear, therefore, that the colossal monument rose gradually, and at considerable intervals, into the proportions which it now presents; and therefore the poem, as we have it now, presents, not so much the appearance of an epos, with a clearly and consistently developed action, as of a vast encyclopædia of all the narratives and myths that bore more or less analogy to each other as members of the same family or cycle. As to the exact date of the final redaction of this corpus of myths into the shape in which it is now before us, there has been great diversity of opinion among the Orientalists, owing to the difference of stand-point from which they were disposed to look at it. The primitive elements of the text have led some to refer it to the remotest antiquity, and Wilson maintained that all the Puranas are derived from it; while its comparatively modern form and other indications have induced others to claim for it a much more recent date, and to put it as late as some centuries after Christ. Among the latter we may mention Professor Weber, of Berlin, who bases his opinion upon the evidence of some Roman writers of the Empire, and upon a Kawi version of some books of the poem, recently discovered on the island Bali, near Java. The more probable supposition is that the Mahabharata, as we have it now, was redacted some time during the last centuries preceding our era, and that the work was undertaken by the Brahmins as a defence against their rivals, the Buddhists, whose increasing influence and power were in no small degree due to their voluminous writings, and whom the old sacerdotal caste thus sought to combat, by collecting and arranging in one work all the old legends and traditions of the Aryan race that might throw *éclat* around their history and advance the future movements of their polity. This supposition accounts completely for the observed inequalities of style and contents of the work, portions of which only are of the primitive period, while a host of others, although interblended with them,

belong to several different epochs, some of quite an ancient, others of a comparatively recent date.

The veneration attached by the Hindus themselves to their great national epopee was never excelled by that of any other sect or nation for their sacred writings. We have already seen this from the definition of its title, and the cause of it may, to some extent, be perceived from the following statement of Madhava, a writer of the fourteenth century of our era. "We learn," says he, "from the sacred scriptures, that it is a disgrace for women and the *Sudras*" (i. e. the masses), "who have not received the investiture of the sacred cord, to read the Vedas. Now, if this be so, how then shall these two classes of persons become acquainted with the way to future happiness? We answer, that it is through the Puranas and other works of the same category. It is on this account that it has been said, that, as the Vedas cannot be comprehended by women and *Sudras*, Vyasa, from motives of benevolence, composed the Mahabharata to remedy the evil." The book, we perceive, was thus looked upon as the gift of a divine charity, intended for the benefit of all classes of the nation,—for the weakest and the humblest as well as for the learned, the opulent, and the powerful. The mere reading of the work was therefore regarded as an act of piety and faith, and claimed as such by Vyasa himself, or by his representative, who, in his exordium to the work, makes allusion to it several times, and in language like the following: "The true believer, who shall constantly listen to the reading of this section from its beginning, shall never fall into any kind of misfortune. . . . The reading of the Bharata is sacred; all the sins of him who reads but a portion of it shall be obliterated without exception. . . . The body of the Mahabharata is truth and immortality. . . . He who in faith shall persevere in listening to the recital of this sacred book, shall obtain a long life, great renown, and the way to heaven."

The poem under consideration is, as we have already seen, commonly referred to the epic kind, although it is far from corresponding with any one of those of the same class known to us from the Greeks and Romans. Everything is here on the extravagant scale of Oriental proportions, and the thread

of the action is not unfrequently almost entirely lost amid the exuberant multiplicity of accessories and details. Hence it comes, that, while the spirited descriptions of its battles remind us of the Iliad and the Thebaid, the extremely romantic adventures make us no less often think of the Odyssey, while the multitude of its curious legends draws on our poetic faith to even a greater extent than the Metamorphoses of Ovid or the miraculous stories of the Middle Age.

The subject itself is simple enough, however difficult it may be at times to follow the tortuous deflections of its labyrinth. It is the long and sanguinary conflict between the Pandavas and the Curavas, all of whom are either cousins-german or brothers, the rival branches of the lunar dynasty of the Bharatides, which once had its seat in Hastinapura, the ruins of which are still visible in the vicinity of Delhi. The founders of these branches are the two brothers Pandu and Dhritarashtra, here represented as the sons of Vyasa, the supposed author of the poem. Of these two brothers Dhritarashtra was the elder and had one hundred sons, while Pandu had only five, who are, however, here spoken of as personages of such distinction that their real origin is attributed to no less august a source than that of five divinities. Pandu died early, and his sons, after arriving at a certain age, were adopted by their uncle in order to complete their education with their cousins. For some cause or other, Dhritarashtra after a while invited the eldest of his nephews to share the responsibilities of his government with him, and appointed him heir presumptive.* This unaccountable partiality naturally bred jealousy among his many sons, so that the latter began to vex and persecute

* Philibert-Soupé (*Revue Contemporaine*, Vol. XLII. p. 297) makes Pandu the elder of the two brothers, who from some motive or other relinquished his throne to Dhritarashtra, without, however, surrendering the right of succession due to his five sons. The sons of Dhritarashtra then, unmindful of the favor bestowed upon their parent, begin to harass and exile the Pandavas, and this gives rise to the war in question. But this account, if sustained by any of the documents, stands in glaring contradiction with the subsequent development of the action, and cannot therefore be admitted as correct. Christian Lassen, on the other hand (*Indische Alterthumskunde*, Vol. I. p. 633), maintains that Dhritarashtra does not really become king, because he was born blind; nor Vidura, the youngest, because he is the son of an inferior mother; and that the Pandavas are therefore the real heirs to the throne, and their uncle only a sort of natural tutor.

their cousins, the Pandavas, in every possible manner; and this quite natural hate gave rise to the war, the long and varied course of which constitutes the action of the poem. After an interminable series of strange incidents, of wanderings, and of battles, in which at sundry times no less than eighteen armies figured, the Pandavas, the injured party, obtained at last the victory on earth and admission to the supreme felicity of heaven. Such, then, is briefly the outline of the argument of the epos before us. The events here spoken of are doubtless of a legendary character, but it is nevertheless almost a certainty that they are founded upon a real historical basis, in the rivalry of two royal houses of the Aryan race, and in a bloody conflict by which, at a remote period, the soil of Bactria and of the North of India was desolated. The conclusion more especially bears evidence of sacerdotal influence, and has, like a multitude of other facts and incidents, suffered from the poetical license of the caste in whose interest the epos was compiled. We must not omit to add, however, that, as far as the legend is concerned, the memory of the sons of Pandu has kept itself alive from generation to generation until the present time, and that, contrary to every scientific hypothesis, the inhabitants of the Peninsula still do not hesitate to refer to the reign of these princes the sculptures of the temples at Ellora, the curiosities of the grottos of Elephanta and Salsette, and all the remaining monuments of a style of art and of a civilization swept away ages ago.

The Mahabharata is, as we have already said, divided into eighteen books or cantos, of which each is, in its turn, subdivided into sections and lessons; and of these many are so loosely linked to the movement of the fable, that one is not unfrequently in danger of losing one's way entirely, without a guide. These Books we now propose to pass briefly in review, giving, in the first place, a concise sketch of the progress of the action, and adding here and there an outline of such of the accessories as may serve to fetch out some of the more salient characteristics of the epopee.

The First Book commences, like many of the Byzantine and mediæval Latin chronicles, with a number of preliminary amplifications, the most valuable of which is perhaps the versi-

fied table of the contents of the work prefixed to it.* We are then treated to a complete theogony, to the creation and history of the gods, the number of which is claimed to be no less than 36,333, and to a variety of fantastic mythological legends, most of which, however, are of more value to the archæologist than to our present purpose. After this genealogy of the gods we are naturally next introduced to that of the heroes of the epopee themselves, and this, together with an account of the origin of their rivalry and of the first phases of their quarrel, occupies the remainder of the canto.

The *rishi* Vyasa, the father of the heroes and author of the work, was, we are told, the grandson of the celestial nymph Adrika, the son of the sage Parasara and of Adrika's fair daughter Satyavati; he was born on one of the islands of the Yamuna, and thence also named Dvaipayana, or "son of the island." To save the dynasty of Hastinapura, to which in second marriage she had become allied, his mother, Satyavati, having lost her own sons by her second royal consort, directed Vyasa to sue for the hand of Ambika, the daughter of the king of Benares, and the widow of his brother. Vyasa obeyed, and Ambika bore him two sons, of whom the first was Dhritarashtra, blind from his birth, and the second Pandu, affected with the white leprosy. A third son, Vidura, whose mother was a maid, could not aspire to the privileges of the rest, although naturally sound and of superior endowments.

Through the influence of Bhishma, his grandmother's royal consort, Dhritarashtra, in spite of his blindness, obtains the hand of Gandhari, the daughter of Subala, the king of Kandahar. The young queen makes a solemn oath of fidelity to her new husband; and such seems her attachment to him that, when the venerable Vyasa is present on a visit, she asks it of him as a special favor, and as her reward, that he should procure her a hundred sons precisely like her husband. The *rishi* cannot refuse; and by means of an artificial process, the details of which we need not here repeat, he after a while succeeds in accomplishing what the alchemists of the Middle Age so often

* Of this First Book we have, besides the new translation of M. Fauche, partial versions, and other valuable contributions, from the pens of Wilkins, Bopp, Eichhoff, Franck, Pavie, and Foucaux.

and so fruitlessly attempted, and the queen is presented, not only with her hundred sons, but with a daughter to boot, all of them of the same age, all of them flesh of her own flesh. The name of the one who passed for the eldest was Duryodhana; that of the daughter, Duhsala; and the brothers subsequently became known as the Curavas.

The conjugal adventures of Vyasa's other son, Pandu, were no less wonderful than those of his brother. Pandu married two wives, of which the one was Kunti, the other Madri, both of them of royal descent, and the first already possessed of a son from the divine Aditya (the sun), by the name of Karna. One day, while out hunting, Pandu by an accident killed, according to some, a Brahmin, according to others, a pair of sacred gazelles; and this crime brought on him a malediction and the punishment of impotence. Pandu, in his despair, retired to the forests of the Himalaya with his two wives, and there was soon relieved of his distress by miracles. By dint of certain magic formulas, obtained from her old lover Aditya, Kunti came into the possession of the power of at pleasure calling to her aid the intervention of any divinity she chose, and it was thus that she bore her husband three sons; from Yama, the god of justice, she had the honest Yudhishtira; from Indra, the god of the air, the valiant Arjuna; and from Vayu, the god of the wind, the impetuous Bhimasena, who afterward acquired the surname of Vri-Rodara or "Wolf-belly." With all this Pandu was so well pleased, that he solicited the same favor for his second wife, Madri, who, after her invocation of the Newins (the *Gemini* of the Hindus), bore him two sons, Nakula and Sahadeva, both of them handsome youths, swift on foot, and ardent in combat. Pandu was now the father of five sons; and so beloved was he of his two consorts, that when, some time after, he died, they disputed with each other the honor of perishing with him on his pyre. Madri carried the day, and in her dying moments she left her two sons to Kunti, who in the subsequent parts of the poem figures frequently as the only maternal representative of the family.

The earlier years of the Pandavas were spent in retirement from the world, in the society of pious hermits and of their

mother, Kunti. But they had no sooner arrived at the age of adolescence than they were transferred to Hastinapura, where, after some tests of their legitimacy, Dhritarashtra, who was now already on the throne, consented to recognize them as his nephews, and allowed them to be educated with his own sons, whose tutor at the time was the venerable Drona, a Brahmin versed alike in the knowledge of the sacred texts and in the art of war. The old Brahmin had recently come to the court to rouse it to war against Draupada, the prince of Panchala, one of the companions of his earlier studies, from whom his honor had received a wound which in his estimation merited punishment. His new students made rapid and brilliant advances in every art he undertook to teach them; but the seeds of jealousy soon sprung up among the young cousins. For the Curavas were as haughty as they were valiant, and they expected to be the rulers; while the Pandavas were more or less looked down upon.

The secret spite was fanned into a blaze of open animosity by an incident which owed its origin to the vanity or imprudence of old Drona. He hit upon the unfortunate plan of instituting a grand tournament, for the purpose of testing the comparative agility and courage of his young pupils. The description of this occasion is animated enough, and incessantly reminds us of Homer, of Virgil, and of many a chivalric encounter of the Middle Age. A vast amphitheatre is raised, the immense tiers of which receive the eddying multitude of warriors and priests, of merchants and of people. The throne is occupied by the blind old king himself, with his faithful Gandhari, his other women, his ministers and courtiers by his side, while the old preceptor Drona, whose white beard, hair, and sacerdotal robes render him an object of special veneration, acts as the *antistes* of the sacrifice. The blind monarch keeps himself informed of every movement of the scene, while Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, is likewise on the alert, and moved to tears when she witnesses the entrance of her sons hailed with immense popular applause. The chariot-race, the combat with the scymitar and sword, and trial of skill with the bow and arrow, constitute the diversions of the heroes. A club duel between Duryodhana, the eldest of the Curavas,

and the gigantic Bhimasena, would have become mortal, had not Drona's son been ordered to separate the combatants. The final scene is one of really dramatic interest, although we have not room to sketch it here in full. Karna, the son of Kunti and the Sun, steps forward to defy his half-brother, the royal Arjuna; but his legitimacy is contested, and Duryodhana has first to raise him to the rank of king. He is, however, no sooner consecrated, than an old coachman emerges from the crowd to claim him for his son. Karna is thunderstruck, and his chagrin is doubled by Bhimasena's defiant taunts, who abuses him, until Duryodhana, to justify his act, with angry retort calls his antagonist to order. This tournament and its direct consequences constitute the commencement of the hostility between the two branches of the royal family, concerning which we may here in advance remark, that the caste of the warriors (i. e. the *Kshatriyas*) and the inhabitants of the cities are manifestly on the side of the Curavas, while the Brahmins, the hermits, and the rural people are on that of the sons of Pandu.

After the successful completion of a war of vengeance, undertaken to gratify Drona's wishes, the old monarch, sensible of the weight of age and of his blindness, offers to divide his power with Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas, and expressly nominates him heir presumptive. This partiality for his nephews is far from being grateful to his already irritated sons, and Duryodhana especially now puts in motion a thousand machinations to exile and destroy his obnoxious kinsmen. With a number of specious representations he at length prevails upon the aged king to consent to a removal of the Pandavas and their mother to a delightful spot on the banks of the Ganges, where he says he has directed one of his confidants, Purothana, to provide them with a sumptuous mansion. He has, however, secretly ordered the palace to be fitted up with a variety of combustible substances, ready to take fire instantaneously at any moment. The five exiles, with their mother, have no sooner finished the long journey and taken possession of their new abode, than they at once perceive the danger, and prepare to meet it. A miner, sent after them by their devoted half-uncle, Vidura, is engaged to excavate a subterraneous passage, through which, in case of accident, they might

escape without observation. But they do not even wait for the accident to happen ; they invite Purotshana, with his adherents, to a brilliant entertainment, and when the orgies of it had commenced, they themselves set fire to the house, and then adroitly take to flight, leaving their enemies alone to perish in the conflagration, although the rumor of it, reaching Hastinapura, reports them likewise dead, and induces Dhritarashtra to offer expiatory sacrifices on their behalf. In this flight the valiant Bhimasena acts a part similar to that of Æneas at the fall of Troy. With Kunti on his shoulders, two of his brothers in his hands, and two around his loins, he forces his way through every obstacle with the rapidity of the wind, until they arrive safely on the banks of the river, which they then at once cross in a bark provided for them by the vigilance of Vidura.

The fugitives at first pass along the Ganges, but, afraid of treacherous pursuit, they soon plunge into the heart of the densest forests, where, after some wanderings, they finally again reach the sacred solitude in which the five princes had spent their earliest years. Exhausted by the long hardships of their flight, they all of them lie stretched upon the ground asleep, except Bhimasena, whose vigilance will not allow him to repose. And that this precaution was not ill-timed is soon made evident by the appearance of a danger which might have proved destructive to the entire company. The spot happens to be infested by one of the giants or ogres of old India, whose aspect, size, and strength are described as most terrific. Bhimasena is first accosted by the ogre's sister, who has the same name as her brother,—Hidimba. She no sooner lays her eyes on the young hero than she becomes passionately enamored of him, and advises him to flee, offering to convey him and his friends with magic through the air to some distant place of safety, provided he would agree to accept her favor. But Bhimasena is not the hero to shrink from an antagonist of any sort ; and Hidimba no sooner shows himself than he meets him in an encounter far more desperate than that between Alcides and Antæus. Repelling the assistance of the enamored giantess, and of his brothers, whom the fray roused from sleep, he alone fights the howling monster, flooring him, not thrice, but no less than one hundred times, and finishes by tearing

him entirely to pieces. The Pandavas then triumphantly resume their journey; but their footsteps are pursued by the ogress, who cannot bear to lose the hero in possession of her heart. Bhimasena desires to dismiss her without more ado, until Yudhishtira interposes in her behalf, and she finally prevails by addressing a most touching appeal to the mother. It is agreed that the Calypso should have her lover for a given time, and Bhimasena, after some reluctance, follows her to a retreat beyond the mountains, where they then spend a period of ephemeral happiness. When the hour of parting has arrived, the giantess leaves with regretful sighs, while the Aryan hero returns to his friends to resume his journey.

Hidimba is not the only ogre destroyed by our valiant Pandavas. For, as they continue their journey from forest to forest, they never fail to halt wherever they find a hermitage, and the anchorites always receive them with distinguished honors, expecting in return their aid for the removal of dangers. They thus deliver their pious hosts from the assaults of a number of *raksharas*, and Bhimasena has another desperate encounter with a formidable anthropophagus by the name of Vaka, whom he demolishes as he did Hidimba.

The wanderings of our fugitives are suddenly interrupted by the intelligence of a *Swayamvara* expected to take place at the court of one of the monarchs. This was a festival instituted by the old kings of India for the benefit of a young princess on her arrival at a marriageable age, and for the express purpose of giving her a chance to select her husband. On this occasion it is Drona's old fellow-student Draupada, the king of Panchala, against whom the Curavas had recently been to war, that invites to court in behalf of his fair daughter Draupadi. The young Pandavas cannot resist the temptation of so fine an opportunity for the display of valor, although attended with some risk; and they at once proceed towards Panchala, disguised as *brahmacharis* or students of divinity, to prevent discovery. On their arrival in the city they lodge and live in the humblest manner, begging their bread, so that not even their cousins, the Curavas, who had likewise responded to the invitation, could recognize them. The scene is represented as one of the most gorgeous magnificence, and there is an un-

interrupted series of diversions for sixteen days. At the end of this time the fair princess at length makes her appearance, sumptuously robed, covered with jewels, and on her head a diadem of gold. After the customary sacrifice, Drishtadyumna, the brother of the princess, amid the sound of instruments and drums, advances to announce the trial and the prize. He points to a mark high suspended in the air, then to some arrows on the ground, and to a bow which is so inflexible that none but the most sinewy arms can ever dare to manage it. The mark is to be struck by five successive darts; and the successful archer, provided he be otherwise acceptable,—that is to say, noble, handsome, and brave,—is at once to have the fair Draupadi for his reward. He concludes by enumerating to his sister all the chiefs present, with their genealogy and achievements.

The contest is one in which, as in Homer, the gods themselves take pleasure, among them Krishna and Rama, who are inclined to favor the sons of Pandu. The trial has no sooner commenced, than nearly all the chiefs are in succession subjected to most cruel disappointment from inability to bend the bow, on which they expend a multitude of breathless efforts to no purpose. Karna alone is likely to succeed; but when he hears the haughty Draupadi exclaim, “I shall never choose the man of equivocal birth!” the bow drops from the hands of the unfortunate hero, now again outraged. Several other princes try, and fail, like those before them, until at last Kunti’s second son, Arjuna, comes forward, handsome and brave, clad in the costume of a novice. His appearance piques the curiosity of the Brahmins immensely, and they are breathless between hope and fear. The young brave then advances, invoking the gods and saluting the enchanted bow with respect, which he bends without much difficulty, and, grasping the five arrows, he transfixes with unerring aim the mark. The Brahmins tear their garments with amazement and delight, the musicians and the bards celebrate the victory, nay, the very vault of heaven opens, and a shower of flowers descends! Draupadi, smiling, then approaches the victor, places a wreath upon his front, and follows him as he retires. The victory, however, gives rise to a most amusing, although sav-

age, scene of violence. The warrior princes are furious at being thus defeated by the obscure disciple of the priests, and even meditate revenging the affront, talking of nothing short of murdering their host together with his son, and of consigning the daughter to the flames. A battle ensues, similar to that of the Centaurs and the Lapithæ, in which the Pandavas are again made to confront their cousin-enemies among the rest. The latter, it is true, are vastly superior in number; but the noble sons of Pandu, besides being applauded by the Brahmins, are supported by the gods Krishna and Rama, so that the contest does not long remain doubtful. On this occasion Karna and Bhimasena again render themselves conspicuous, and the Curavas, with their allies, are soon obliged to admit themselves vanquished, and, crestfallen, retreat to their respective countries. The Pandavas then return to the spot where they had left their mother, bearing with them Arjuna's fair prize, who from that moment is admitted as a sharer of their wanderings, and the consort of the five brothers.*

Among the episodes presented by the rich canvas of the First Book, there are a number which in this cursory survey we have been obliged to pass over; but there is one which links itself too closely to the fable of the poem to be left entirely unnoticed. It is the naive and touching story of Sakuntala, which at a later date becomes the basis of Kalidasa's drama of that title. The legend, however, is here of a much more primitive and simple type, and the lost ring does not occur among its accessories. The monarch espouses Sakuntala simply because he is touched by her virtue and her amiable qualities. Their valiant son, whose exploits subsequently render him illustrious, is here represented to be none other than Bharata, the ancestral sire of the heroes of our epopee, in the title of which the poet deemed it proper to perpetuate his memory.

* That polyandria, however, was not really among the customs of old India is manifest from the fact that Vyasa explains this exception to the general rule from the circumstance, that Draupadi, formerly the daughter of a *rishi*, had been predestinated to have five husbands after her next birth. Unable to obtain a husband, the young lady, with a series of penances, prevailed on Siva to allow her a petition for a favor. When this was granted, she asked for a husband possessed of every virtue. To her misfortune, however, she pronounced her prayer five times, and was on that account doomed to have five consorts in her next state of existence. Lassen's *Indische Alterthumskunde*, Vol. I. p. 642.

The Second Book is replete with stirring incidents, all of which link themselves closely to the progress of the action. The scene opens with the success of the Pandavas, but this is soon followed by reverses, and ends with a most shameful catastrophe.

The acquisition of Draupadi brought the Pandavas into intimate relations with the court of Panchala, and they also became allied with Krishna, the king of Mathura, not unfrequently confounded with the divinity of that name, but here represented as one of the most valiant and brilliant princes of the age. Almost at the same time Dhritarashtra, too feeble to manage his affairs any longer, adopted the impolitic expedient of dividing his states among the two branches of the royal house. By the terms of this partition, his hundred sons, the Curavas, were to keep the kingdom of Hastinapura along the banks of the Ganges, while the five nephews were to occupy the territory along the Yamuna, with Indraprastha for their capital. The latter are no sooner in possession of their portion than they begin to extend their conquests in every direction,—Nakula and Sahadeva north and south, Bhimasena in the east, and Arjuna westward. During these expeditions Arjuna more especially displays proofs of valor by immolating the king of the Tshedi, and by carrying off and marrying the youngest of Krishna's daughters, the lotos-eyed Subhadra. He then enters the forest of Khandava, where he offers sacrifices to Agni, the god of fire, and receives from him the bow Gandiva,* two quivers with arrows, a chariot, and every sort of magic arm. The new kings of Indraprastha enjoyed the reputation of being just and brave, and lived happy and respected. To augment the honor of his family, the eldest of the number, Yudhishthira, announces a *radjasuya*, a solemn public sacrifice, at which the suzerains of the East were accustomed to exact the oath of vassalage of their tributary princes. At this ceremony, which was numerously attended and of the most pompous description, the eldest of the Curavas, Duryodhana, was likewise present, devoured by jealousy at the sight

* This bow has here a proper name, like the swords of some of our mediæval heroes, the *Balmung* of Siegfried, the *Joyeuse* of Charlemagne, the *Durandal* of Roland, the *Colada* and *Tizona* of the Cid, &c.

of so many chiefs submitting their homage and of such varied and brilliant magnificence as was displayed on the occasion. He witnesses his rivals crowned, obeyed throughout the whole of Central India, dreaded from sea to sea, and, what is worse than all, supported by no less than two hundred thousand Brahmins. The thought of this robs him of all joy and even of his sleep, until, after his return, he finds some relief from consultation with one of his confidants, Sakuni.

The astute counsellor is no sooner apprised of the chagrin of his master, than he offers to relieve him by inveigling his rival into the chances of a game of dice, at which he feels himself so expert that he is sure of his ability to win away from him whatever he may now possess calculated to rouse jealousy and envy. The plan, although opposed by blind old Dhritarashtra and by the noble Vidura, is nevertheless adopted, and the game is agreed upon by both parties. The occasion proves to be a most unhappy one for the unfortunate Yudhishtira. An evil genius seems to have taken possession of him, and he risks his chances with a recklessness that borders upon madness; while, according to the custom of the age, his adversaries strain every nerve to excite and to mislead him. In this state of frenzy the infatuated monarch gambles away successively, not only his bracelets, rings, and other personal ornaments, his palaces, his immense riches, including the most costly jewels, but also his noble brothers Bhimasena and Arjuna, his half-brothers Nakula and Sahadeva, and last of all, like one of the ancient Germans, his own liberty to boot! When all is lost, Sakuni, who here acts the part of a sort of Mephistopheles, coolly reminds his opponent that he has one more precious object left to risk, — his queen, the beautiful Draupadi. The insane prince stakes once more, and when he loses the last game too, the elders of the people veil their faces and murmur, as if they were witnesses to an act of sacrilege. The fair princess is now the property of Duryodhana, and is soon sent for through his charioteer. But she in anger and in tears, half nude and with dishevelled hair, refuses to quit the hall until she is dragged away by force. In the *mêlée* one of the Curavas uses rude violence, which would have deprived her of all covering for her person had not a miracle from heaven inter-

posed by investing her with a magic robe that could not be torn away from her. The scene rouses Bhimasena's just indignation, and his menaces of vengeance are so terrible as to require the blind old monarch's intervention, who promises the outraged heroine every satisfaction she may ask for. She contents herself with the modest demand of her liberty, including that of her five royal consorts, and to this there is no objection. They are permitted to leave, but are not allowed to carry anything away with them except their chariots and their arms. Before quitting, they unfortunately delude themselves into the offer of a second game of dice, in which, however, they are again beaten, and this time without the hope of any redress. Their doom is settled. They are at once to leave the kingdom, to live in exile for twelve years, and to spend the thirteenth year without discovering their rank or claiming recognition from any one. Thus ends the Second Book, which, although not free from much that our taste cannot approve, yet contains passages that would lose nothing in comparison with the most admired portions of the most famous epic poems.

The Third Book is a long *hors-d'œuvre* in the action of the poem, presenting to us scarcely anything else than a multitude of episodes and legends, some of which, however, are characteristic enough, and interesting from more than one point of view.

Deposed from their late regal magnificence, the five exiled heroes, with their mother and their consort, wander now again from forest to forest, as poor and deserted as they ever were before. They are, however, this time followed by no less than one thousand Brahmins, who support them by their alms; and they appear to have now no other care than that of visiting the most venerated places of pilgrimage, where they may listen to pious hermits, and sometimes even to divinities incarnate in human form, who recount to them miraculous histories and legends. In connection with these pilgrimages we have more especially to notice two of the five brothers, — Arjuna and Yudhishtira, — the former on account of his marvellous adventures, the latter on account of the curious legends related to him by one of the anchorites, the priest Lomasa.

To acquit himself of his religious obligations the brave

Arjuna directs his solitary course northward towards the summits of the Himavat, passing through the densest of the forests, the impenetrable mazes of which he finds peopled with every variety of animals and birds, and frequented also by a multitude of fairy beings, or *genii*. He is scarcely in the sombre bosom of the solitude when his ear is suddenly struck by the sound of shells and drums from heaven; his eyes witness a shower of flowers descending, and the clouds gathering themselves up into the shape of a huge curtain in the air; the trees incline themselves before him, the brooklets flow murmuring by; while peacocks, swans, and herons greet him with their joyous cries. The magic scene before him produces no other effect than that of stimulating him to still greater austerities than he had resolved on practising before. His limbs covered with the coarsest habiliments of the ascetic, he surrenders himself to a series of the most rigid mortifications, living on nothing but dry leaves with at intervals a little fruit; and this already slender diet he keeps diminishing until, by the end of three months, he feeds on nothing but the air. Besides all this, he keeps his body balanced for a long time in painful attitudes, and, in short, omits nothing in exacting of himself the severest of all penances. It was a belief current among the Aryans, that in a series of such self-inflicted castigations a man might reach a certain point at which he could draw a saint or even a divinity from his seat, or exchange places with him; and they were wont to address their prayers especially to Siva to that end. And this was really the case with Arjuna at this time. For while he is in pursuit of a demon by the name of Muka, who in the shape of a wild boar had advanced to injure him, Siva, under the form of a huntsman, makes his appearance and transfixes the animal with his spear. The dead beast, however, unfortunately gives rise to a quarrel as to which of the two heroes the booty belongs to, and Arjuna assails the strange hunter with every artifice at his command. But he soon finds himself combating an adversary of no common sort; all his efforts are expended to no purpose, until he finally sinks bleeding and exhausted on the ground, where he sleeps for an entire hour. On awaking he, to his amazement, perceives the divine Siva, surrounded by his glorious retinue; whereupon the god

advances to caress and flatter him, and makes him a present of his own trident. Presently several other divinities — Varuna, the god of the seas, Kubera, the god of riches, Yama, the god of the dead, and Indra, the god of the sky — appear to him in a similar manner, and present to him, one after the other, a variety of magic arms, which are to assure him the victory in the great conflict pending between his family and the Curavas.

But this is not the only one of Arjuna's adventures recorded by the poet. A still more remarkable one is a journey to the ethereal mansions, to which his divine sire, Indra himself, invites him, sending his charioteer to convey him through the air from the peaks of the Mandara to his celestial residence, Amaravati.* The aerial journey, the appearance of the divine city, and the hero's magnificent reception are described with all the eloquence and gorgeous imagery peculiar to the Orientals. In this description the mountains of India figure as sacred, precisely like those of the Hebrews and the Greeks. The Himalaya and the other peaks of the immense chain served not only as the ordinary retreat of anchorites, of priests in meditation, and of monarchs in disgrace, but they were regarded by the popular imagination as the resort of the gods and as the sacred asylum of the virtuous dead, and were the frequent objects of pious visit, and of fervent prayers. It was from these peaks that the souls of men, in their process of gradual purification, were supposed to ascend on their journey towards the successive spheres of the moon, the sun, and of the Supreme Being, which was the limit of their aspiration after beatitude.

While Arjuna is thus occupied with his illustrious adventures, his elder brother, Yudhishtira, the late victim of his ruinous passion, spends his time in the society of a priest by the name of Lomasa, patiently listening to a series of marvellous stories. The personages who figure in them are, nearly all, either divinities, demons, kings, or Brahmins, and they are in their character as eccentric and fantastical as any-

* Of this episode we have a German and a Latin version from the pen of the distinguished Bopp.

thing in Oriental literature.* Such are, for example, the legend of Ilvala and Vatapi, two evil *genii*, combated by the venerable Agastya, the founder of one of the oldest and most celebrated hermitages; that of a conflict between two Ramas, both of them incarnations of one and the same god, Vishnu, — but one of them a warrior, the other of sacerdotal rank; that of the demon Vritra, annihilated by the bolt of Indra in a fierce general battle between the demons and the gods, similar to that of Jupiter and the giants among the Greeks; that of the miraculous descent of the Ganges, which, we are told, owes its origin to Ganga, the daughter of Himalaya, and nymph of the celestial waters, prevailed upon by the prayers and penances of the royal Bagiratha to fall from heaven and to assume the course of the celebrated sacred stream of India; and, finally, that of the metamorphosis of Indra and Agni, the gods of the air and of fire. The last of these legends is too curious and pleasing to be omitted here. It so happened one day that Indra and Agni conceived the idea of disguising themselves, for the purpose of finding out who was the best of men. They accordingly descended and entered the palace of a king by the name of Sivi, — the former in the shape of a falcon, the latter in that of a pigeon. The pigeon, pretending to be frightened by the falcon, sought refuge in the lap of the king, who generously protected it against the assaults of its enemy; while the falcon, on the other hand, imperiously claimed his victim, although to no purpose. Sivi offers him, instead of it, a bull or a boar, a gazelle or a bison, but the falcon insists on having the pigeon and nothing else. The prince, whose heart was one of the warmest charity for every creature, could not consent, and proposes to surrender to him, in exchange, a portion of his own flesh equal in weight to that of the pigeon. The bargain is accepted, and Sivi with a knife himself cuts out a piece of his own body. It is, however, found too light. He cuts out another lump; and when this again turns out to be too little, he puts himself entire into the scales, bleeding and mutilated as he is. The trial is pronounced decisive; the two divinities

* Of these stories we have French versions from Pavie and Foucaux. The legend of Ilvala and Vatapi occurs also in the *Ramayana*.

have now incontestably discovered the best of men. They thereupon reveal themselves, and Sivi receives their benediction, with the assurance that he shall live forever both in the memory of men and in the abodes of heaven. In regard to the first two of these legends, it is here not out of place to add, that they manifestly relate to the earliest history of India, the southern part of which was primitively an immense forest, where the Brahmins went to establish themselves as anchorites, in advance of the rest of their race, precisely as in the Middle Age the Christian monks occupied and cultivated so many solitary spots, not reached yet, or not cared for, by the secular tide. The ogres and demons spoken of as perpetually devouring the priests and interfering with their sacrifices are the representatives of the indigenous tribes, who, as savages and cannibals, offered every species of resistance to the new civilization brought by the Aryan Brahmins, and who but slowly retreated before its advance.

The rest of the Third Book, although likewise composed mostly of episodes, offers us a few quite interesting threads of the story, which we now propose to collect, and then to take, in conclusion, a rapid glance at the remaining legendary parts of it.

Arjuna, in possession of divine arms, has triumphed over the *asuras* (demons), and has returned to the earth to make war upon a city in revolt. Meanwhile the beautiful Draupadi has been forcibly carried off by a hostile monarch; but the ravisher is soon pursued, and not only deprived of a portion of his defeated army, but branded with the disgraceful mark of slavery by the five injured brothers. The virtuous and faithful Draupadi thus recovered, the collected members of the family once more return to their sacred retreat, where they prepare themselves for a brighter destiny by listening with obsequious ear to many earnest lessons and touching stories from the lips of their pious allies of the sacerdotal order.

It happened one day that, while Yudhishtira and Bhimasena were rambling about the woods, the latter of the two brothers, after having combated with success every variety of monster, at last became himself involved in the folds of a mysterious reptile, which turned out to be one of their own kinsmen, Nahusha, the son of Ayn, metamorphosed into a

serpent for having offered an outrage to the sacerdotal caste. The monster, who here appears as a sort of sphinx, offers to release his victim, provided his brother would make satisfactory answer to certain questions; and this proposition gives rise to an extremely curious and subtle metaphysico-theological dialogue, in which Yudhishtira is subjected to severe examination. He is questioned concerning the nature of man, who, occupying a sort of middle ground between the divinity and the animal, can by his merits rise to a level with the one and by his errors degenerate into the other; concerning the five senses, and the seat of the soul with its three faculties, which is made to reside in the brain of the forehead; concerning some of the moral qualities which we should strive to acquire; concerning murder, veracity, charity, alms; concerning the condition of the real Brahmin, who is one by his virtues and his talents rather than by name or the privilege of birth; and concerning sundry other points. Yudhishtira's explanations are all of them judicious, and the test turns out to Nahusha's entire satisfaction. The latter then proceeds to give an account of his misfortune. He was once celebrated for his wisdom, and honored by the demigods, the *genii*, and the giants; but he became elated, and had himself carried about in a palanquin borne by a thousand priests. This insolence attracted the notice of the hermit Agastya, who cursed him and condemned him to take the form of a serpent; and this he was obliged to wear until delivered from it by the visit of the just and honorable prince whom he was now addressing. It thus happened that both Bhimasena and Nahusha found themselves released at the same time. Delighted with the recovery of his human form, the latter concludes his discussions with the following memorable words: "Sincerity, the mastery over our senses, the practice of austerities, of liberality and benevolence, the absence of injustice towards others, and a constant regard for our duty,—these, O king, are the qualities which constitute our worth, and not our caste or our origin."

Among the legends with which the pious hermits of the desert are reported to have entertained their royal visitors, there are three which now claim briefly our attention. They are the

episode of the deluge, that of the love of Nala and Damayanti, and lastly the no less naive and refined story of Satyavan and Savitri, — all of which have long since become known to us through the translations of Bopp, Milman, Burnouf, Pauthier, and Ditandy.

The Hindus were possessed of an account of a universal deluge, which in many respects is analogous to that of the Hebrews. According to their sacred texts, however, the world in its present state has already passed through seven different phases of existence, of which each was composed of seven ages, and each presided over by a *Manu* of its own, the representative and depositary of the divine power. The name of the first of these was Swayambhava, or “Son of the Self-existent”; that of the seventh, Vaivaswata, or “Son of the Sun,” who is represented as at once a king, a sage, and a saint. Now it was during the lifetime of this last Manu that the cataclysm here in question happened; and he saves himself, precisely like Noah, in a vessel built by himself at the advice of a fish, which he had raised on his premises and let loose into the sea. The catastrophe lasted for seven long years, at the end of which the highest peak of the Himavat again became visible. Manu, with seven *rishis* and the fish, were the only living beings saved, and Brahma confers on him the charge of organizing and peopling the world anew.

The episode of Nala and Damayanti is known to us from several translations, and from Lamartine’s eulogy in his *Course on Literature*, as one of the most naive and graceful narratives in Hindu literature. Nala was the handsomest of princes, an excellent horseman, pious, brave, successful at games, the commander of valiant armies, and admired by noble women. Damayanti, the daughter of a neighboring king, was a princess adorned with every accomplishment of nature and of art. Now it so happened that in her presence everybody spoke of Nala, and before the latter everybody celebrated the charms of Damayanti, and the result was that they became disposed to love each other without ever having met. Heaven intervened to foster the nascent sentiment, and marvellous swans flew fluttering through the air from one to the other, augmenting their mutual sympathy with messages. Presently, however,

the princess fell into a melancholy revery, and grew pale and languid. Her father, suspecting her trouble, summoned all the princes of the land to a *swayamvara* (public festival of betrothal), at which, among the crowds that flocked thither, Nala was determined not to be the last. While on the road, however, he accidentally met four divinities, Indra, Agni, Varuna, and Yama, who pretended to be likewise enamored of the young maiden, and charged him with the singular mission of transmitting to her their messages of love. Nala at first protests; but he is commanded to proceed, and cannot disobey. On his arrival, through the intervention of the gods, he obtains access to the apartments of Damayanti in advance of the rest of the competitors, and then delivers his message. But what is his surprise, when, struck with his appearance and mindful of the voice of her swans, she declares that she shall choose no other than himself! Nevertheless, delighted as he is, he yet asks her, for formality's sake, to accept one of the four divinities; for how could she reject addresses so august? But the virgin breaks out into tears, and vows that, although honoring all the gods, she could never consent to wed any one but himself. It is at last agreed to settle the matter according to the custom of the occasion; the four divine aspirants are to be invited precisely like the rest, and yet there shall be no impediment to her choice. On the appointed day, when all of them are assembled, the divinities resort to a new artifice, by all of them assuming the same features, — those of Nala. Now how could the embarrassed princess distinguish between five suitors so closely resembling each other as to show no difference? Trembling, she invokes the aid of Heaven, beseeching the immortals for a sign by which she might recognize the one she cherished above all others. Her prayer is granted; her eyes are opened, and she perceives a difference between her hero and the august competitors, so that her choice is made correctly, and the two lovers are henceforth inseparable.

On leaving, the four divine rejected suitors are nevertheless civil enough to honor the affianced with a variety of magic presents, and the nuptials are celebrated soon after. Nala takes Damayanti to his own kingdom, where they live happy, pious, and worshipped by their people. They have two children,

a son and a daughter, both of them fair as the day, as were their parents. Their felicity, however, does not last many years before it is interrupted by one of those terrible reverses for which the East was more especially remarkable. Deluded by two demons into gambling with his brother, Nala loses to the latter whatever he possesses, — his kingdom, his treasures, and his crown; all that he has left is Damayanti. Exiled by his pitiless brother, he takes refuge in a wild forest, where he becomes insane and ready to abandon the faithful companion of his life. His person changes, as well as his character, and he after a while enters the service of the king of Ayodhya in the capacity of equerry. Disconsolate and lamenting loudly, his virtuous and faithful Damayanti passes through the midst of a thousand dangers, until she eventually reaches the court of Tshedi, where she is provided with the means of returning to her father. Yet she is unable to forget her husband, however guilty; and to recover him she resorts to the stratagem of announcing another *swayamvara* for her benefit. Nor is her hope disappointed; for among the many suitors present at the festival the king of Ayodhya makes his appearance, with his new equerry in his retinue. A recognition takes place, which is described with the most delicate touches of the most genuine poetry. Nala recovers his reason, his beauty, and his happiness; in short, he is entirely restored to his loving spouse. He is no sooner himself again than he meditates revenge. He demands another game with his brother, and this time he wins in his turn, regaining all that he had lost before; whereupon he reascends the throne which with fair Damayanti he had once so nobly occupied, and they live on calmly and contented.

Omitting the no less naive account of Satyavan and Savitri, we now pass on to an examination of the Fourth Book, which, though, like the preceding, not exempt from superfluous accessories, nevertheless considerably advances the action of the epopee.

The Pandavas were, as we already know, condemned to remain in exile for twelve years, and the end of this long term was now fast approaching. Aware of his new danger, their arch-enemy, Duryodhana, sends spies in every direction to dis-

cover trace of them, but to no purpose. They are living quietly concealed at the court of Virata, king of the Matsyans, whom they serve under assumed names and in various capacities. The royal Draupadi had here become the maid-servant Sairindhri; Arjuna, the eunuch Vrihannala, a dancer; Yudhishthira, the brahmin Kanka; Bhimasena, the cook Ballava; while Nakula passed for a groom, and Sahadeva for a herdsman. It so happened one day that the Curavas, in conjunction with the Trigartians, made a descent upon Virata's rich stock of cattle, and drove off no less than sixty thousand heifers. The enemy was at once pursued, but, to Virata's great distress, though the Trigartians are routed and dispersed, the Curavas remained in possession of the entire booty. The loss was an immense one when we recollect that nearly all these monarchs, like the Homeric, were nothing more than chiefs of clans, and that in most instances their cattle constituted the main source of their revenue.

Meanwhile the superintendent of the royal stables hastened to young Prince Blumindjaya, urging him to proceed at once to the aid of his struggling father and his men. But the crown-prince is a supercilious craven and a braggart, who, instead of instantaneously responding, only boasts of his ability to achieve a thousand wonders had he not lost his driver in a recent battle, without whom he says it would be idle for him to attempt to act. To meet this cowardly subterfuge the pretended maid-servant, Draupadi, enters, to inform him that the eunuch, Vrihannala, had formerly been charioteer to the heroic Arjuna, and that he perhaps might render him the same service. Blumindjaya has therefore, for honor's sake, to send for him; but the eunuch only appears to make excuses, alleging that he can scarcely be called a man, and that he knows nothing but dancing, singing, and playing on various instruments. The excuse, however, is not accepted; the courtiers and slaves at once proceed to clothe and arm him, amid a multitude of jests and laughter, and the royal poltroon is obliged to hasten with him to the field of battle. They have no sooner arrived at the place of danger than the young prince displays his real character. His hair stands on end when he finds himself in the presence of a formidable foe, without his

father, without soldiers, destitute even of a body-guard, and he knows of no other expedient than that of a hasty retreat. It is in vain that his charioteer expostulates, reminding him that base flight is unworthy of the memory of noble heroes, and that it is better to die combating than to desert disgracefully; he insists on the retreat, until the feigned eunuch, indignant at the cowardice, drops his false pretences, and proves himself possessed of consummate bravery. For as soon as the young prince has left his chariot and runs, his charioteer pursues him, seizes him by the hair, drags him back to his car, and, obliging him to take the reins, himself claims the place of combatant in his stead. The prince does not venture to object, and the enemy at a distance is filled with wonder at the novel spectacle of a man in royal apparel managing the horses, and of a dancer preparing to fight them. The eunuch, however, is not yet ready for action. He has first of all to fetch the magic arms of the Pandavas; and these are concealed in one of the trees of a lonely cemetery, where the five brothers had suspended them in a bag in shape and color resembling the envelope of a corpse, so that no warrior could touch it without rendering himself impure and losing his caste. They have no sooner reached the tree than the eunuch directs his late master, Bhumimdjaya, to climb up for the sack. On opening it they find poniards, scymitars, arrows, and bows, among others Arjuna's noble Gandiva, the present of Agni, the god of fire. The eunuch now explains to the prince some of the marvellous properties of the arms, until the latter stands amazed and stupefied; but when the former proceeds to assert that he is the brave and terrible Arjuna himself, and that he, with his four brothers and their consort, have been servants in his palace in disguise, Bhumimdjaya prostrates himself in homage before his recent slave, and acknowledges a miracle. The hero from the high seat of his chariot examines each one of his arms, and they all incline themselves in homage before him, and address him as if they were alive. He, in return, clasps them to his bosom, and vows that they shall ever remain the object of his tenderest regard. Then, grasping his trusty bow, he bends it rapidly, and sends an arrow sweeping through the air, which trembles as if agitated by a mighty

storm, while the earth beneath is shaken as if one mountain had been piled upon another. The spot where the missile falls is marked by a dazzling blaze, and it strikes with a noise that resembles Indra's thunder. The Curavas are convinced that Arjuna is awake again; and well might they be so, for their defeat is a most signal one. The royal parasol of old Bhishma, the most illustrious of their ancestors, has been struck and shattered; while their standard, which bore an ape upon a ground of gold, is likewise transfixed and tattered. The king of the Matsyans returns in triumph to his home, bringing back with him all that he had lost before.

King Virata, however, is as yet unacquainted with the secret of his success, and attributes his victory to the courage of his son, who in his turn suffers himself to be complimented, while Arjuna modestly keeps silent. Intoxicated by his triumph, Virata presently desires a game of dice with his minister of state, the Brahmin Kanka, who, as we already know, is the eldest of the five brothers, the royal Yudhishtira. The latter, recollecting what this game has already cost him twice, — his kingdom, his liberty, with that of all his brothers, — hesitates for a great while; but is nevertheless finally prevailed upon to accept. While the two are playing an altercation arises, in the course of which Yudhishtira, not satisfied with angry words, empties the dice-box into the royal face. The insult is a flagrant one; but a Brahmin is a privileged and sacred character. In short, the offended party begs the offender's pardon, and the matter ends without any further notice. Three days after, the Pandavas purify themselves and put on their most costly ornaments. The twelve years of their exile are now at an end, and they present themselves before the monarch, not, as heretofore, in the capacity of his servants, but with the noble air of the five fugitives with whose renown all India was filled. Virata, who meanwhile has become informed of what he owes Arjuna, cannot consent to allow him to depart without some compensation, and offers him his daughter Uttara in marriage. But the hero declines the proposal, partly because he is already married, but more especially because, during his long residence in the palace, he says he lived constantly in

the society of the young lady, who has become accustomed to look upon him as one of her masters. Nevertheless he does not hesitate to accept for his son Abhymanin the flattering offer which, from motives of delicacy, he is obliged to decline for himself; and it is agreed that this union shall form the basis of a permanent alliance between the Pandavas and the royal house of the Matsyans,—an alliance of which, in the next book, we shall see some of the consequences.

The Fifth Book contains an account of the preparations for the war which both the Pandavas and the Curavas insist on pursuing, notwithstanding several attempts to produce a reconciliation. It also offers us some interesting vestiges of the religious philosophy of the old Hindus, and concludes with an enumeration of the forces.

One of the Oriental god-men, Krishna, who is represented as one of the incarnations of Vishnu, and prince of Dwaraka, has left his country after having killed a tyrant by the name of Kansa, who sought to destroy him. He stands in relations of consanguinity with the two rival families, and on that account comes to both their camps with a view to attempting a reconciliation. Already aware of what the future has in reserve for the contending parties, he accosts Duryodhana first, and offers him either his personal support or that of a considerable army. The latter stupidly prefers the aid of the army, and Krishna from that moment embraces the cause of the Pandavas, who are likewise sustained by the king of the Matsyans and the king of Pantchala. Shortly after, the blind old father of the Curavas, who still rules at Hastinapura, disapproving of the violence of his sons, sends to his nephews his equerry, Sandjaya, who eloquently advocates peace, but has to return without arriving at the contemplated result. The warlike preparations therefore now proceed on both sides as actively as they ever did before. Meanwhile old Dhritarashtra, as if he felt the hour of some great calamity at hand, assembles the wise men of his court to consult them concerning the interpretation of the Vedas, the consequences of virtue and of vice, the mysteries of creation and of a future life. In connection with this consultation we encounter the general elements of *yoguisim*, an austere doctrine, more fully developed in the

next book, but here presented under a simpler and doubtless a much more primitive form. Its character is that of the complete absorption of man in the divinity by way of meditation. The *summum bonum* can never be acquired by good works alone, for they demand efforts which trouble the mind's repose. To attain to the desired result, it behooves us to isolate ourselves entirely from the world, to surrender ourselves to absolute silence, to annihilate in us all the impressions of joy or sorrow produced by praise or blame, and not to suffer the slightest perturbation of the mind. It is thus alone that we can arrive at the contemplation of the Supreme Being, which in this connection receives the name of *Bhagavad*, i. e. the "Ever-blessed One," and to whose praise the poet addresses a hymn of no less than forty stanzas, apparently of a very ancient date and quite obscure. While the old monarch is thus occupied with his Brahminic advisers, Krishna, whose pacific proposals to the Curavas had, as we have seen, been without success, proceeds to the camp of the other party, which has now come under his protection, and there entertains Yudhishtira by discoursing to him concerning the civil and military duties of princes. Nor has Virata, the king of the Matsyans, been meanwhile idle; he has assembled his council twice, while the Pandavas have been so active as to bring together no less than seven armies. The forces of their adversaries are, however, still more numerous and imposing, as Duryodhana, their chief commander, proudly passes them in review. The book concludes with a long enumeration of these forces, such as we find in one of the cantos of the Ramayana, and in the Iliad.

The Sixth Book is remarkable chiefly for the metaphysical episode to which we have just alluded, and which is extended enough to form a poem of quite respectable dimensions by itself. It bears, however, every mark of being of a comparatively modern date, and was probably incorporated into the primitive text not long before the time of its final redaction. In this episode the mystical doctrines advanced in the preceding book are developed more completely, and in so remarkable a manner as to have commanded the attention of some of the most eminent Orientalists and critics of England, France, and

Germany,* of whom some, as, for example, Schlegel, were formerly transported with admiration for the divine author of such ineffably sublime poetry. The time of dithyrambic eulogy is now gone by, and the subject is regarded in a calmer light. Nevertheless, the episode is still in more than one respect well worth consideration, and we cannot but regret that our limits will not permit us to give anything more than a few of the most salient characteristics of it. The manner in which it links itself to the *nexus* of the fable is in itself a curiosity, and is briefly as follows.

The two hostile armies are collected upon an immense plain. The air is already resounding with the din of conchs and drums; chariots are flying, arrows whistling, in every direction. In a word, the battle has commenced in earnest. Still the brave Arjuna is not yet fighting, although he has standing by his side no less illustrious a witness than Krishna himself, who on this occasion has consented to serve his cherished pupil as his charioteer and equerry. In glancing at the multitude of kinsmen, allies, and friends before him, divided by the war and destined to be united presently in death, the hero is suddenly seized by the pangs of melancholy; his limbs tremble, his mouth is parched, his hair stands on end, his skin is scorched with a burning fever; in short, he is cast down, and even his bow drops from his nerveless hand. Thus struck with horror at the thought of immolating any of his own, and willing sooner to fall himself, he resumes his seat upon his car, pale and disheartened, because it seems to him that justice and honor have made their exit out of the world. It is at this moment of despair that his noble ally, Krishna, by his side, informs him that he has but the appearance of being an earthly prince, and that in reality he is one of the incarnations of Vishnu, the Supreme Being, or the Bhagavad. Immutable though he is in substance, and the commander of the elements, he yet has the power to make himself visible to created beings; and whenever in this world virtue declines and vice

* We need only name, for England, Wilkins, Thompson, and Griffith; for France, Parrand, Chézy, Burnouf, Cousin, Saint-Hilaire, and Lamartine; for Germany, William Schlegel, William Humboldt, Hegel, Bopp, and Lassen; a list to which we must not omit to add the name of Dimitrios Galanos of Greece.

is triumphant, he, from time to time, assumes human form, and is born for the salvation of the just and the destruction of the wicked. He then goes on, upon the field of battle and at the very moment of the commencing conflict, to entertain his disciple with a variety of earnest lessons, discoursing to him concerning the vanity of all earthly things and the insignificance of human actions, — concerning the real nature of the soul and of the divinity, the obligations and the destiny of created beings, their migrations from body to body and from one sphere of existence to the other, until their final absorption in the bosom of the Infinite, or of Brahma. According to the divine teacher, the really wise man does not suffer his repose to be disturbed by either the living or the dead, the body being to him no more than the perishable envelope of an immortal intelligence, which constantly changes form and body, putting them off and on as we do our garments. The soul being thus indestructible, death cannot be looked upon otherwise than with indifference; and it is therefore the duty of the warrior to fight, regardless of all the consequences resulting from the fulfilment of his mission. His equanimity should not be troubled either by his reverses or his success, and his reason should under all circumstances remain equal to itself, and perfect. We must not imagine, however, that man should on this account waste himself in indolence; he must be active, and not dwell too much upon the consequences of his actions; he should be free, calm, self-denying, disinterested, curbing his desires and passions, pure in heart, devoted to the practices of religion, and not neglectful of his offerings to the gods. It is by a virtuous course like this that we can escape the greatest of all evils, which is to be compelled to return to life again, and can thus attain to the enjoyment of supreme felicity, to what the sages call *nirwana*, which some maintain to be a mere return to nothing, while others claim it to be a delightful union with God. Such is a brief outline of the substance of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, or “Song of the Blessed One,” which, in spite of its numberless eccentricities, repetitions, and even contradictions, is yet remarkable enough to have merited the attention of the many eminent *savans* who have occupied themselves with it. As to the value of the doctrines advanced

in it, it cannot be denied that, although not destitute of many noble, nay, even sublime traits, they are yet liable to gross perversion, and that the abuse of them linked itself directly to the numberless absurd penances, and to the fanatical horrors of the pagodas and of the Juggernaut, formerly so frequent in the East.

The long lesson which Arjuna receives from his divine master is not without its effect; and we presently find him as active and invincible as ever in the long series of battles with the account of which the poet has filled no less than three Books,—the Seventh, the Eighth, and the Ninth. In this account, which is not exempt from a multitude of redundant accessories, and which is otherwise heavy and monotonous, we meet with a host of tableaux of heroes and heroic deeds, precisely as in the *Iliad*; while the frequent intervention of the supernatural powers, and the incessant employment of enchanted arms, remind us of the wildest romantic fictions of the Middle Age. The place which served as the theatre for these endless effusions of human blood was the plain of the Curus, in the vicinity of Delhi, a spot still celebrated among the inhabitants of India. The fighting lasted no less than eighteen days, and was interrupted only by the lamentations and the maledictions of the conquered. The Curavas are this time again the party that meets with the heaviest losses; they are, in fact, almost annihilated. For not only does the bloody conflict in rapid succession prove fatal to their grandsire, Bhishma, their military teacher, Drona, who is killed by treason, their royal friends and allies, Karna and Salya,—of whom the former falls under the sword of the brave Arjuna, the latter beneath the herculean blows of Bhimasena,—but all the male representatives of blind old Dhritarashtra, his one hundred proud and warlike sons, are, one after the other, ingulfed in the universal carnage; and the old king's equerry, Sandjaya, carries home the tidings of their death. Among their number was included the arch-enemy of the Pandavas, Duryodhana, the eldest of the brothers, to whose sinister instigations the war was mainly due. He attempted to make his escape, and would have succeeded had not the vigilance of his enemies pursued him. For when he saw his chariots

and his elephants, his foot-soldiers and his horsemen, disappear before him, as the snow vanishes beneath the burning sun, he fled from the battle-field, and sought refuge in the woods, where, we are told, he passed over a sheet of water, which became solid under his feet. But the watchful Pandavas are soon after him; and they no sooner discover him than they violently drag him back to the place of conflict. There they oblige him to fight his second club-duel with Bhimasena, in the course of which his adversary fells him, mutilating his head and person in the most revolting manner. The honorable and more humane Yudhishtira, although the brother of the victor, is shocked by the barbarity of the act, and expresses his disapprobation.

The Tenth Book has still further horrors to recount. It gives us a description of a nocturnal assault on the camp of the Pandavas, and of the cruel butchery connected with it; reminding us of similar scenes in Virgil and in Homer, and still oftener, by its terror and ferocity, of the *Eddas* and of the *Nibelungen*. We are also made acquainted with the last moments of Duryodhana, "the wicked warrior," as the poet makes his name imply.

The signal defeat of the Curavas preys on the minds of three of their most redoubted champions, and they meditate vengeance. They are Kritavarman, Kripa, and Drona's son, Aswatthaman. The last is more especially afflicted, and is determined not to rest until he shall have exacted due punishment of the murderer of his father, whom he knows to be Dhrishtadyumna, the king of the Pantchaliens. It is true that he at first entertains some scruples about the consequences of a perfidy such as he contemplates; but he soon reasons them away, and is resolved to carry out his plan, even at the risk of being condemned to reappear in life in the shape of an insect or a worm. The expedition is therefore determined upon; and the three champions, with their chariots and arms, proceed towards the camp. But in their passage through the woods their course is suddenly arrested by a gigantic supernatural phantom, the appearance of which is described as most hideous and terrifying. The monster vomits streams of magic flames at them in every direction; and these flames

reflect, indefinitely multiplied, the form of Vishnu, the god of preservation. It is in vain that the intrepid Aswatthaman undertakes to combat an adversary like the one before him, who devours all the weapons launched at him, — his arrows, his sword, his war-club, and even his chariot-pole, — until the hero remains entirely disarmed. Reduced thus to despair, Aswatthaman can think of no other expedient than that of resorting to demoniacal arts. By fervently chanting a mystical hymn addressed to Siva, the evil spirit and the god of destruction, he summons him to his aid, and, like the Faust of our own legend, pledges him his soul in exchange. The bargain is accepted; and the god presently makes his epiphany in a display of hideous forms that leave the revolting spectres of the Brocken far behind them. The reader will excuse us from the details of the scene, which are altogether too fantastic to suit our Occidental taste. In a word, then, Aswatthaman has devoted himself to Siva, and the latter has taken possession of him, and has made him invincible. Thus fortified by supernatural agency, the hero at once proceeds; and first of all to the tent of Dhrishtadyumna, the murderer of his father, whom he finds extended on the most costly carpets, and fast asleep. He rouses him with kicks; then, seizing him by the hair, he knocks his head against the ground, and assails his throat and chest with such savage ferocity that the poor king, in spite of his desperate resistance, is soon crushed to death like a beast. The royal guard and the women have not recovered from their consternation before the fierce avenger has already fallen upon other victims, who in rapid succession, and by the hundred, pass from sleep to death, — soldiers, horses, and elephants all falling pellmell beneath the ruthless cuts and stabs of his sword and poniard. Even those who attempt to rouse themselves to a defence are so unfortunate as but to wound or kill each other in the dark. The terror of the scene is augmented by the flight of neighing horses and of frightened elephants. The victims who are lucky enough to escape from the hands of Aswatthaman fall into those of Kri-tavarman and of Kripa, who stand sentinels at the gates; and in this manner the carnage proceeds, until the camp is converted into a lake of blood. The slaughter has no sooner

subsided, than a multitude of ogres and vampires (the *rakshasas* and *pisachas* of the Hindus, which the poet here delineates as more terrific than the Cyclops and the Harpies of Homer and of Virgil) appear, to make their foul repast upon the carcasses of men and beasts; and thus ends the terror of the horrid massacre.

The three champions do not retire from the camp until the day begins to dawn; and, as they then retreat, they recount to each other the details of their savage achievements. Aswaththaman confesses himself satisfied with his revenge, although chagrined at one thing, which prevents their triumph from being complete; and this is the absence of the five Pandavas, whom an accident has thus saved from the lamentable fate of their friends. They then proceed towards the woods in search of Duryodhana, to whom they desire to report success, if he should chance to be still alive. They find him yet breathing, but in such a wretched plight that it makes them sigh to observe him extended so helpless, with his faithful war-club reposing by his side. In honor of his last hour they commend his valor, heap curses on his assassin, and lament that it was not their privilege to defend and save him. Aswaththaman then tries to cheer him with the following consoling intelligence: "Duryodhana, since thou art yet alive, I wish to communicate to thee something that will be soothing to thy ear. There are no more than seven combatants alive on the side of the Pandavas,—the five princes themselves, Krishna, and his charioteer Patyaki. On the side of the sons of Dhritarashtra there are no more than three,—Kripa, Kri-tavarman, and myself. The scions of Draupadi have all of them been massacred, and so have those of Drishtadyumna. The Pantchaliens have all perished, with whatever there remained of the Matsyans. Thou thus perceivest, prince, that measure for measure has been dealt to them!" And Duryodhana replied: "Yes, yes, I see it; this intelligence consoles me, and restores me to tranquillity of mind. I now feel as if I were the equal of god Indra. Farewell! May ye live happy! In heaven we'll meet again." After uttering these words, the valiant monarch stabs himself, and heroically breathes his last, to the deep sorrow of his friends around him.

His soul, the poet says, rose up to heaven, the abode of pure spirits, (to which, according to his creed, the final act of his life admitted it, purified, at once,) while his body remained to mingle with the earth.

The Eleventh Book is no less full of interest than the preceding, and offers us a sort of after-sight of the horrors of the carnage, in the lamentations of the women, the description of the appearance of the battle-field, and the last homage paid to the deceased of both parties.

Notwithstanding the cruel retaliation exacted by the surviving heroes of the royal party, the Curavas nevertheless cannot deny that they are the defeated. Of this no one is more aware than blind old Dhritarashtra himself, who, deeply sensible of his irreparable losses, enumerates and laments them with his equerry Sandjaya. The latter endeavors to console him by attributing the fault chiefly to his eldest son and to the perfidious advisers by whom they were led astray. In this attempt he is soon joined by the sagacious Vidura, who in his turn condoles with the old monarch in a long discourse replete with moral reflections, similar to those of the Bhagavad-Gita, but not necessary to be repeated here. The well-meant lesson, however, is far from producing the desired effect; for Dhritarashtra presently becomes senseless beneath the weight of his afflictions, and there is some difficulty in bringing him to life again. On recovering, his thoughts at once revert to his misfortune, and he remains inconsolable.

Meanwhile the signal for the lamentations is given; upon which old Queen Gandhari, the mother of the Curavas, Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, and the remaining mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters of both families, all leave their homes to drive out to the battle-field, where, with torn garments and dishevelled hair, they unite their sighs and clamors, screaming like the females of the sea-hawks or the eagles; and all this in the presence of an immense concourse of merchants, laborers, and other people. While this is going on, Kripa, Kritavarman, and Aswatthaman, apprehensive of danger from the outraged Pandavas, conclude it best to leave, and then push their chariots in three different directions,—the first towards Hastinapura, the second towards his own king-

dom, and the third towards the hermitage of the supposed bard, the old royal grandsire Vyasa.

Meanwhile the male representatives of both the mourning parties likewise make their appearance, to mingle their laments with those of the matrons. Yudhishtira, the chief of the victorious princes, is so profoundly moved by the spectacle before him, that old Dhritarashtra, disconsolate as he is himself, has to make an effort to console him. The feeble old monarch is even ready to pardon the Pandavas, with the sole exception of Bhimasena, the butcher of his dear Duryodhana, from whose approach he shrinks with a sort of horror, until Krishna, with kind words and reproofs, prevails upon him to be reconciled. Old Queen Gandhari, although inclined to curse rather than to forgive, is yet finally induced likewise to submit. There is therefore now a more or less sincere general resignation to the stern yoke of necessity, and common lamentations are blended with the noblest emotions of charity. The comparatively young and beautiful Draupadi and her mother-in-law, Kunti, mingle their tears together, — the former over the loss of a son, the latter over no special loss of her own, but only over the general calamity; while Gandhari, like another Hecuba, divides her anguish with no less than one hundred daughters-in-law, and over the loss of as many sons and husbands. It is the old queen's lament, therefore, that the poet has justly made, not only the most diffuse, but also the most eloquent, touching, and pathetic of the number. In all this there is really poetry, the genuineness of which cannot be contested, as there is also in the description of the battle-ground, than which there can be nothing more picturesque. When the lamentations are ended, the bards begin to chant their elegies; sacrifices are offered, ablutions and perfumes prepared, while others construct the pyres on which they pile the bows, pikes, chariot-poles, banners, and dead bodies of the heroes to be burnt. In looking at the flames, devouring the remains of so many noble sons, Gandhari's grief is roused once more; and she curses Krishna, whose all-powerful aid has brought such signal ruin on her house. The malediction, although launched at a god, is yet one uttered by a mother, and is on that account, as we shall see presently, destined to take effect.

One might suppose that with the celebration of these funeral rites the poet might have ended, like Homer, or even with the death of Duryodhana, like Virgil. But the imagination of the Hindus recognized none of the limitations of the Romans or the Greeks, and so our epos is allowed to spin itself out into no less than seven additional books, in which we are successively introduced to Yudhishtira's establishment upon the throne; to Krishna's calamity and death (the effect of Gandhari's curse); to the monarch's regret of his career, his resignation, the partition of his kingdom, his journey to the other world, and to his final apotheosis, — a limit beyond which the poet did not probably think it wise to extend the action of his fable.

The lamentations and the imprecations of so many women over the cruel loss of those dear to them produces a most melancholy effect upon the mind of Yudhishtira, and he is so far from taking any pleasure in his success, as to lose himself completely in the most gloomy reveries; he curses the profession of arms, the heroism of the warriors, the guilty violence which has led to so much disaster, and envies the less ambitious and purer life of the hermits of the forest. These private reflections of the prince are followed by a series of discourses concerning the moral and political obligations of monarchs, addressed to him by his grand-uncle Bhishma, as the latter is lying on his death-bed from the wounds he had received in battle; and these discourses are, according to the fashion of the East, interspersed with apologues and legends, too numerous, however, and too tedious to deserve our notice here.

As soon as the excitement has somewhat subsided, a meeting of the royal chiefs is convened, at which the four other sons of Pandu, with Krishna and the priests present on the occasion, decide that Yudhishtira shall occupy the throne without any contestation or division. They then at once take measures to organize the government, which they initiate by the public celebration of the customary *asvamedha*, that is to say, the Sacrifice of the Horse. The ceremony seems to have been a very ancient one, and was in its character religious and military at the same time. Its real design, however,

was purely military ; for it was one of the established methods of exacting feudal vassalage, and of distributing investitures and other grants among the warriors and Brahmins who came to recognize the suzerain. The custom was briefly as follows. A horse was suffered to run at large across the adjoining districts, and this animal was then pursued by a mounted warrior, who kept pushing it ahead before him, and who challenged all the princes that ventured to oppose its course. All those who suffered the courser to pass unmolested were supposed to admit the sovereignty of its master, and were expected to be present at its sacrifice, which was not unfrequently accompanied with the most brilliant festivities. This sacrifice took place as soon as the horse had returned to its point of departure, where it was then publicly immolated to the gods in the presence of a large concourse of men of every rank. On this occasion it was Arjuna who pursued the horse, driving it to a great distance, chiefly south and west. He met with some difficulty from the inhabitants of Maghada and of the Sindh, but his mission was nevertheless, upon the whole, eminently successful.

Yudhishtira has thus become the sovereign of all Central India, which he governs with no less skill than moderation, sustained by the devotion of his four brothers, and by the homage of all who are fortunate enough to be benefited by his many virtues. His reign is represented as a tranquil one, and, as our Brahminic poet says, one during which the hermits could attend to the practice of their austerities without the fear of ogres. Blind old Dhritarashtra is treated with the most marked consideration by his nephews, whom he seems to have pardoned completely for the murder of his sons. He remains at court for fifteen years, and during all this time he not only receives every kind attention, but he is even, at least nominally, consulted on all important matters of state. At the end of this term, feeling his strength declining, he concludes it best to retire to one of the sacred forests as an anchorite, and there to prepare for his ascension to heaven. In this voluntary retreat he is joined, not only by his queen, Gandhari, but also by Kunti, the widow of his brother Pandu, as well as by his third brother, Vidura, and by his faithful

equerry, Sandjaya,—all of whom agree to share his contemplations and his privations until the last day of his life. They have, however, inhabited the solitary spot for only four years, when they are visited by one of those terrible conflagrations, to which the parched districts of India have at every period been liable; and during this terrible disaster the old monarch, his consort, and his sister-in-law all perish in the flames. Vidura and Sandjaya succeeded in making their escape towards the Himalaya, where they lived concealed among the rocks, waiting for their end. This method of terminating one's days was one to which we find the kings and queens of old India frequently subjecting themselves, when they had either lost their power or were weary of the world. Such is the substance of the Twelfth, Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Books of our epos.

The Sixteenth Book acquaints us with the effect of Gandhari's curse on Krishna, to whose powerful intervention the Pandavas owed their victory, and the old queen the loss of her one hundred sons. Krishna was the king of the Yadavas, an extensive nation consisting of four large tribes, and his capital was Dwaraka, a criminal and licentious city, corrupted more especially by the abuse of fermented spirits. Among the crimes recently perpetrated by them was an insult offered to four Brahmins in the repute of special sanctity, and often mentioned among the hymnographers of the Vedas. Krishna's people were therefore ripe for punishment as well as their monarch, and the chastisement came in a series of plagues similar to those which desolated Egypt in the days of Moses. Violent storms arose, and at night those who were asleep had their hair and nails assailed by mice and rats; the cranes imitated the hoot of cats, and he-goats the howl of jackals; cows gave birth to asses, mules to young camels, dogs to cats, and the ichneumon to rats; the food of the city was invaded and defiled by thousands of loathsome insects; the sun even moved contrary to its natural course, and the stars were eclipsed one after the other. But all these signs and miracles were without effect upon the hardened inhabitants, who disregarded the warnings of the gods, precisely as they did those of their *gurus* and their Brahmins. The corruption went on, and members of the same family turned traitors to each other.

This perilous condition of his people led Krishna to grave reflections, and he at once suspected the dire consequences of Gandhari's imprecation, which, however, he endeavored to meet with energetic measures. He prohibited the use of ardent spirits with a heavy penalty, and commanded the inhabitants to prepare for a pilgrimage to the sea-shore, where they might purify themselves. The order is obeyed, and they are already encamped outside the city gate, where, however, they are determined to have one more good time of it. They are there with their concubines, ready for a parting festival, for which they have at hand the most exquisite viands, liquors, and perfumes of every sort, dancers and mimes, and whatever else is necessary for a true Belshazzar's feast. The assembly is presided over by Krishna himself, with his two brothers, his entire family, and a number of other chiefs. They are, however, no sooner heated with wine, than an altercation arises at his table, which ends in the murder of his eldest and two of his younger sons. The *mêlée* soon becomes general, and a horrible massacre takes place, in which Krishna himself participates, striking dead in every direction. But he presently recovers himself again; and when he sees that he has lost his nearest relatives and friends, he charges some of the survivors to protect the women against the Dasyus, who were the vagabonds and brigands of the country, and others to send for Arjuna to collect the fragments of his accursed nation, while he himself at once retires to one of the sacred forests to meditate in silence over the catastrophe. While he is there stretched upon the ground, endeavoring to annihilate himself before the Infinite, a hunter mistakes him for an antelope, and with an arrow transfixes the sole of one of his feet. But the deluded mortal no sooner advances to take possession of his booty than he perceives that he has struck a mystical being, and his eyes are dazzled when he next sees Vishnu, the four-armed god, mounting in glory towards the sky.

Krishna is not the only one to suffer from the effect of Gandhari's imprecation; Arjuna and the rest of the Pandavas are to feel it too, although at first only in the shape of cruel disappointment. On Arjuna's arrival at Dwaraka, he finds both the city and the palace in revolt, which he

however at once subdues, and receives the sixteen thousand women of the court under his protection. His next care is to provide for the obsequies of the deceased monarch. He orders the construction of a superb pyre, on which he then burns the corpse, and with it four of the surviving widows. He then collects the remaining Yadavas, and offers to conduct them to some other place. They have no sooner left the city, than it is invaded by the sea and ingulfed forever. While on the road Arjuna's magnificent caravan tempts the cupidity of the Dasyus, and the brigands venture an assault, in which they are so successful as to carry off some of the handsomest of their women. The disaster is due mainly to the infidelity of the hero's enchanted arms, which on this occasion refuse to render him their wonted service. Chagrined by the defeat, the first he has experienced, Arjuna moves slowly onward until he reaches his kingdom, where he establishes here and there the Yadavas that have followed him. After a brief visit to our old anchorite Vyasa, (who seems ready to survive all his descendants, probably already occupied with the composition of his book,) the hero returns to Hastinapura, but this time only to announce to his brothers that the protection of the immortals has deserted them, and that it is time for them to undertake the great journey.

Of this celestial journey the next Book, the Seventeenth, offers us a sketch, and the prelude to the so long delayed definitive *dénouement* of our epopee. When Yudhishtira is informed that his faithful ally, Krishna, was the all-powerful Vishnu himself, he trembles; and when he still further hears of the bloody banquet and of the fate of the Yadavas, he sighs in deep mourning over the horrible calamity. It seems to him as if his task on earth were ended, and he now, in his turn, declares to his brothers his desire to ascend to heaven. The four Pandavas are not slow to comprehend, and they not only approve of his design, but agree to join him. He therefore at once proceeds to regulate the partition of his kingdom: Vajra, the only surviving Yadava, is to occupy the city of Sakraprastha, while Parikshita, the grandson of Arjuna, is to rule at Hastinapura, with Kripa for his first minister. Nor must we imagine that on such an occasion so religious a king as Yudhishtira

thira could forget the Brahmins ; he liberally grants them treasures, houses, lands, villages, and women without number. After having thus settled his affairs, and offered religious homage to the *manes* of his ancestors, he bids farewell to his devoted people, who are disconsolate to lose a ruler so just and clement. They are all in tears, when presently they see King Yudhishthira, with his four brothers and Draupadi, leave the city dressed in bark, the common humble costume of the Eastern hermit.

The pilgrims are full of devotion, and resolved to practise the law of renunciation to its very letter. Their march is in an eastern direction towards the mountains ; and when they have reached the forests, their company is augmented by a mysterious dog, who insists on following them, attaching himself more especially to Yudhishthira. Arjuna is still in possession of his bow Gandiva, and of his two exhaustless quivers with their enchanted arrows. But what is his surprise when, in the forest, Agni appears to him and demands the sacrifice of these his precious arms ! Yet he dares not object, and obediently throws them into the water. After a while they reach the foot of the Himalaya, which they then ascend, scaling its steepest and abruptest heights, in expectation of eventually reaching the abode of the blessed. But the patient pilgrims have scarcely one half of the road behind them, when one after the other of the number begins to falter and to sink beneath the weight of their too arduous exertion, while as they sink Yudhishthira explains to each the cause of his failure. Draupadi drops because she has loved Arjuna more than the rest of her consorts ; Sahadeva, because he indulged in the conceit of superior sagacity ; Nakula, because he was too proud of his beauty ; Arjuna, because his prowess made him too presumptuous ; and Bhimasena, because he abused his physical strength for violence. Yudhishthira has been too honorable and just a prince to fail like the rest, and he therefore continues his perilous ascent alone, attended only by the faithful animal which joined him in the woods. As he mounts higher he is met by Indra, the god of thunder, who honors him with an invitation to a seat in his car ; but the conscientious pilgrim is unwilling to enter heaven without his friends, nor can he consent to drive away the trusty servant still by his side. It is in vain that Indra endeavors to

expostulate with him, first about his friends and then about the dog, which he asserts to be no more than a greedy beast, ready even to devour the sacred victims of the altar. Yudhishtira adheres firmly to his resolve. "To drive away," says he, "the man who comes to you for an asylum, to kill a woman, to rob a sleeping priest, or to betray a friend,—these four crimes, O Indra, are, in my opinion, no heavier than the desertion of a dependant as trusty as the one behind me." The dog is not insensible to the compliment; for it is no sooner uttered than the animal is suddenly metamorphosed into a superior form, which Yudhishtira at once recognizes as that of Yama, the god of death and justice, reputed to be his own father. Then, by a privilege which none of his lineage had ever enjoyed before him, the royal chief of the Pandavas is invited to a seat upon a luminous car, which carries him aloft to the abode of the immortals, there to wait in patience for the arrival of his brothers and his wife.

The Eighteenth Book, which bears the title of *Swargarohana*, or "Ascension to Heaven," brings us at last to the conclusion of the work, which introduces us both to the hell and to the heaven of the old Hindus, and to the hero's final triumphant apotheosis.

Yudhishtira has no sooner arrived at the mansions of the blessed than he begins to look about for the cherished companions of his pilgrimage; but how disappointed is he, when instead of them he meets but his detested cousins, the vanquished Duryadhava and the rest of the Curavas! To live in heaven with enemies and far away from those he loves is too much for our magnanimous prince, and he at once begs for the privilege of a descent to Tartarus, if his friends are confined there. The request is not refused, and he receives a guide similar to the Hermes of the Greeks, to conduct him to the seat of punishment. The description of the place, which is represented as full of every horror, is extremely elaborate and graphic. Yudhishtira has already descended some distance into the horrid gulf; but he is soon ready to retrace his steps, unable to endure the pestilential atmosphere around him. At this moment, however, his ear is reached by plaintive voices from below, beseeching him to remain for the alleviation of their

pain : “ Stay, Bharata’s puissant son, stay ! for in thy presence we cease to suffer ! ” The lamentable clamors make our hero sigh, and he at once sends back his messenger to announce to the gods that he is determined not to desert his friends. The divinities are touched by his devotion ; and presently Indra, Yama, and the rest, themselves descend to the abyss, which in their presence loses all its terrors and assumes the radiance of heaven. In a word, the redemption is accomplished, and Yudhishtira’s disinterestedness is honored by Indra himself, who absolves him of all his faults and crowns his merits. As he then moves upward, attended by a melodious train of divine minstrels and aerial nymphs, he sees his ancestors, his friends, and even his adversaries, all seated on resplendent thrones of gold, and applauding his triumphal march. He then bathes in the sacred waters of the celestial Ganges, which have the virtue to purify the soul, and out of which he rises with a new body, — ethereal, exempt from every infirmity and vice. Thus changed, he follows the advance of the gods still farther, until, amid the praises of prophets and of sages, he enters the sacred assembly, where he finds the warriors of both parties, the sons of Pandu and the heirs of Curu, seated together on chariots of light, with the divine Krishna for their protector and their guide. But this is not yet the end of the miraculous vision. He after a while sees all these heroes transfigured into divine forms, and they now appear as so many tutelaries, who had assumed human shape and lived on earth for no other object than that of keeping up the eternal antagonism of good and evil among men.

Such, then, is a brief outline of the contents of the heroic epos of the old Hindus, in which, as we have already said, we have omitted much that is unessential to the action or otherwise irrelevant or out of taste. In respect to the general character of the work, we have already, both in our introductory account and elsewhere, advanced some few remarks, to which we now might add many more, were our limit not already passed. The reader will, however, we hope, excuse us if, in conclusion, we briefly sum up a few of the most salient points to be remembered in an estimate of our epopee. They are : —

That the Mahabharata is a composition of the epic kind, with strict unity of action, creditable consistency of characterization,

and with many admirable beauties of execution; but encumbered with such a variety of redundant accessories as to be entirely beyond the proportions recognized as classical or legitimate, according to our standard.

That its inequalities of style and other indications point to several periods of composition more or less distant from each other, and that neither the progenitor of the heroes, Vyasa, nor any other one man, could have been the author of so immense and incoherent a composition; that, on the contrary, it was originally the work of a number of rhapsodists, and that its present form even is in all probability due to more than one.

That these rhapsodists were sacerdotal, and compiled the work for the defence of their system, and in the interest of their caste and policy. This is manifest, not only from the general tone and tendency of the many episodes and legends, but even from the invention of the fable, the characters and the *dénouement*, where success and glory are made to attend those princes who are the most devoted to the order, which in those days always claimed peerage with, and not unfrequently even the ascendant over, the royal representatives of the warrior caste.

That the poem, as the product of the measureless imagination of the East and of its fantastical mythology, deals in the miraculous to a greater extent than even the wildest legendary fictions of our Middle Age, and that on that account it offers us, both in respect to matter and to form, much that we have to reject as extravagant, gross, out of place, and altogether inconsistent with the requirements of good Occidental taste.

That, notwithstanding all these unquestioned defects, the Mahabharata nevertheless deserves both study and respect, not only as an encyclopædia of Oriental myths, and a mirror of both the legendary and real history, the manners and customs, the public and private, civil, military, and religious life of ancient India, but also in many respects as a poem which presents to us so many beauties of invention and detail that the mind must be obtuse that can remain insensible to them. We need, therefore, apprehend little contradiction when, in conclusion, we assert that the epos under consideration, now that it has come nearly complete within our reach, will hereafter claim its place in the history of literature as one of the great monuments of the genius of antiquity.